

Incorporated October 20, 1988

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 3

LODI HISTORIAN

SUMMER 2009

THE HILL HOUSE MUSEUM

By Ralph Lea and Janice Roth



▲ The Hill House, at its original location of 115 N. School Street, Nellie and Maurice Hill are on the steps; photo taken in 1905.

The Hill's have been in the area since 1869, when Lodi was known as Mokelumne Station. George Washington Hill was born in 1840 in Brownfield, Maine. He was trained as a watchmaker at the Waltham Watch Plant in Massachusetts. He traveled to the west by rail on the Transcontinental Central Pacific in a baggage car. After arriving in Mokelumne Station he had a one story wooden building erected and opened his watch repair and jewelry store on Sacramento Street.

Mary Lewis was born on July 1, 1857 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Her parents were Philander and Mary Lewis. Her father died after he was captured and sent to the notorious Andersonville Prison during the Civil War. Silas Pleas, a Lodi farmer north of the Mokelumne River heard of the widow Lewis. He went east to "woo" Mrs. Lewis. They were married and returned to Lodi by sailing south along the Atlantic Coast, by rail through the Isthmus of Panama and then by boat north to Lodi. Mary brought with her two daughters, Zadie and Mary and one son. There were three girls (Linda, Lillian and Daisy) and one son from the marriage of Silas and Mary.



▲
Wedding photo of
Mary and George Hill,
March 14, 1875.



▲
Nellie Etta Hill, age 3,
1885.



▲
Nellie Etta Hill, 1891.



▲ Nellie Hill, Lodi, California, approximately 1906.

G.W. Hill saw Mary Lewis in his shop and at the Methodist Church. They were married on March 14, 1875. It would be eight years before Nellie Etta Hill was born. She grew to be a very talented girl. She sang, played the piano and composed and published "The Soldiers Farewell" which is believed to have been the first musical composition published by a Lodian. Besides being a musician Nellie wrote poetry, and was an excellent photographer. She developed, printed and tinted her own pictures, many of which are on display in the museum.

Maurice Schussler Hill was born in 1900, 17 years after his sister. His father was then 60 years of age. Maurice's music ability showed up early and he was more likely to be playing the piano than baseball. His father, George, tended to act like a grandfather and spent little time with his son. Mary, his mother, tried to make life easier for Maurice. He studied the piano with some of the best teachers in Northern California. After completing College of Pacific School of Music Program he appeared on bay area radio as a concert pianist. He composed music and wrote poetry for adult and children's publications. Maurice also lived in Hawaii for a few years giving concerts, painting and writing poems.

It was also in 1900 that George Hill decided that the family needed a house worthy of the entertaining that Mary and Nellie were doing. Mr. Hill hired the finest builders of the day in Lodi. The Carey Brothers, Fred and Ed, were engaged to



study of old newspapers. It was also about this time that he decided that upon his death he wanted the "Hill House to become a house museum to honor his family." He wrote that the house was "never to be turned into an office, business or convalescent home," but instead he wanted "the house to be used to display Lodi history."

In the early 1970's, Maurice began writing chapters for a book. He contracted Glaucoma

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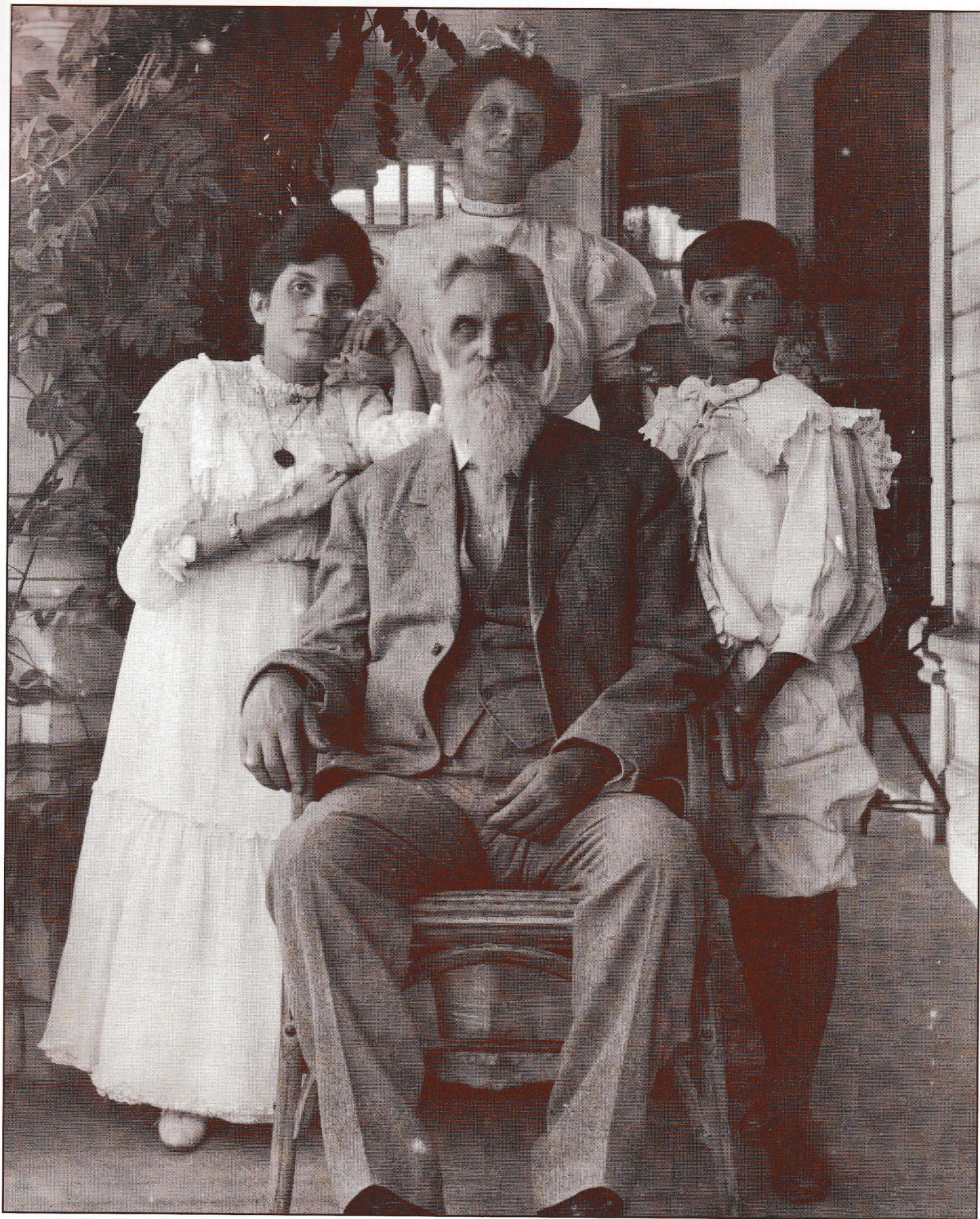
▲ Maurice Hill, Lodi, California. Photo taken by Nellie Hill in 1907.

build the Queen Anne Victorian home at 115 North School Street. The house stood there for almost 50 years before the business district encroached School Street and forced the moving of the house to its present location at 826 South Church Street in 1948. Soon after the move Maurice added a large room, over the kitchen, to be used as a studio where he could paint, practice piano and write. At the time of the move only Daisy, his aunt, and Maurice lived in the house.

After Daisy's passing in 1960, Maurice began an extensive research of Lodi history including interviews of "old timers" and the



▲ Maurice Hill and his mother, Mrs. G. W. Hill at the Hill residence on May 11, 1907. Photo taken by Nellie Hill.



▲ The Hill Family at the Hill home in Lodi, California. Left to right: Nellie Hill, Mrs. Hill, G.W. Hill (seated) and Maurice Hill, 1907. Photo evidently taken by Daisy Pleas.

THE HILL 1907



▲ Left to right: Zadie (Lewis) Runyon, born February 14, 1856 and her younger sister, Mrs. G.W. Hill of Lodi. Photo taken by Nellie Hill on Mrs. Hill's 50th birthday on July 1, 1907.



▲ Birthday party of Maurice Hill, February 23, 1907. Theresa Bauer, Susie Black. Middle row, l to r: Wilma Clark, Maurice Hill. Lower row, l to r: Photo taken by Nellie Hill.



◀ Daisy Marilla Pleas. This photo was taken by Nellie Hill in 1908 in front of the Hill residence, located on South School Street, Lodi, California. Daisy Pleas was the sister of Mrs. G.W. Hill. As far as can be ascertained, she was California's first lady watchmaker. Her business career in Hill's Jewelry store in Lodi began in 1890 and continued until February 1950.

L FAMILY

1909



in Lodi California. Upper row, l to r: Bernice LeMoin,
 urlie Black, Wanda McMurtry, George McMurtry,
 ie Bauer, LeMoin Beckman, Margaret Beckman.



Nellie Hill, 1908. ▲



▶
 Nellie Hill in Japanese costume,
 June 1909 in Lodi, California.



▲ Nellie and Maurice Hill, February 12, 1910, Lodi, California. Nellie made the Indian costumes.



▲ Mrs. G.W. Hill on her 50th birthday.



▲ George Washington Hill, Lodi's first jeweler, wearing his Knight Templar's uniform. This photo was taken by Nellie Hill on May 1, 1910, in front of his home.



▲ Hill's Jewelry Store, 1918-1920, located at 5 N. Sacramento Street, Lodi, California. Rev. Bradner of the Methodist Church is standing left of the showcase. Behind the showcase, front to rear: G.W. Hill, proprietor, Daisy M. Pleas and Leona Tarbell.

THE LODI HISTORIAN

is a quarterly publication of the Lodi Historical Society
P.O. Box 264, Lodi, CA 95241-0264

Editor Ralph Lea

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▲ Hill House, l to r: Linda Wells, Mary Hill, Lillian Cunningham, and Daisy Pleas.